



## **Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards**

### **The American Psychological Association's Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards Program**

#### **Why Focus on Employee Health and Well-Being?**

In today's 24/7 society, workplace pressures continue to mount. Productivity demands, information overload and increasing pressure to balance work and home lives can take a toll on employees' health and well-being. Employers, faced with skyrocketing healthcare costs, global competition and economic uncertainty, are concerned about attracting and retaining high-quality employees and delivering superior organizational performance.

Some companies have responded to these business challenges by taking care of their employees. These employers are creating workplaces that do more than just improve productivity - they build a strong, vibrant organizational culture that supports the company itself. In short, they build a psychologically healthy workplace.

#### **The Benefits of a Psychologically Healthy Workplace**

A psychologically healthy workplace fosters employee health and well-being while enhancing organizational performance, thereby benefiting both employees and the organization.

##### Benefits to Employees

- Increased job satisfaction
- Higher morale
- Better physical and mental health
- Enhanced motivation
- Improved ability to manage stress

##### Benefits to the Organization

- Improved quality, performance and productivity
- Reduced absenteeism, presenteeism and turnover
- Fewer accidents and injuries
- Better able to attract and retain top-quality employees
- Improved customer service and satisfaction
- Lower healthcare costs

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## **Creating a Psychologically Healthy Workplace**

Psychologically healthy workplace practices can be grouped into five categories:

Employee Involvement — Efforts to increase employee involvement empower workers, involve them in decision making and give them increased job autonomy. Examples of involving employees in meaningful ways include: self-managed work teams; employee committees or task forces; continuous improvement teams; participative decision making; and employee suggestion forums.

Work-Life Balance — Programs and policies that facilitate work-life balance acknowledge that employees have responsibilities and lives outside of work and help them better manage these multiple demands. Examples include: flexible work arrangements, such as flextime and telecommuting; assistance with childcare and eldercare; resources to help employees manage personal financial issues; availability of benefits for family members and domestic partners; and flexible leave options beyond those required by the Family and Medical Leave Act.

Employee Growth and Development — Opportunities for growth and development help employees expand their knowledge, skills and abilities, and apply the competencies they have gained to new situations. Examples include: continuing education courses; tuition reimbursement; career development or counseling services; skills training provided in-house or through outside training centers; opportunities for promotion and internal career advancement; and coaching, mentoring, and leadership development programs.

Health and Safety — Health and safety initiatives help employees improve their physical and mental health through the prevention, assessment, and treatment of health problems and by encouraging and supporting healthy lifestyle and behavior choices. Health and safety efforts include a wide variety of workplace practices such as: training and safeguards that address workplace safety and security issues; efforts to help employees develop a healthy lifestyle, such as stress management, weight loss and smoking cessation programs; adequate health insurance, including mental health coverage; health screenings; access to health and fitness facilities; and resources to help employees address life problems, for example, grief counseling, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and referrals for mental health services.

Employee Recognition — Employee recognition efforts reward employees both individually and collectively for their contributions to the organization. Recognition can take various forms, formal and informal, monetary and non-monetary. Ways of recognizing employee contributions include: fair monetary compensation; competitive benefits packages; acknowledgement of contributions and milestones; performance-based bonuses and pay increases; employee awards; and recognition ceremonies.

It is important to note that there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to creating a psychologically healthy workplace. Success is based, in part, on addressing the challenges unique to a particular organization and tailoring programs and policies to meet employee needs.

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Effective, two-way communication also plays a key role in the success of any workplace program or policy and serves as the foundation for all five types of psychologically healthy workplace practices.

### **The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards Program**

The Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards program is designed to recognize organizations for their efforts to foster employee health and well-being while enhancing organizational performance. The program has both state and national-level components:

#### **The State-Level Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award**

Since 1999, Psychologically Healthy Workplace Awards have been presented to organizations by state, provincial and territorial psychological associations with support from the American Psychological Association (APA). Participation in the state-level award program has grown to 51 associations across the U.S. and Canada that, collectively, have recognized more than 300 organizations at the state level.

#### **APA's National Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award**

Nominees for the National Psychologically Healthy Workplace Award are selected from the pool of previous state-level winners. Candidates are evaluated on their workplace practices in the following areas:

- Employee Involvement
- Health and Safety
- Employee Growth and Development
- Work-Life Balance
- Employee Recognition

Additional factors that are considered include employee attitudes and opinions, the role of communication in the organization; and the benefits realized in terms of both employee health and well-being and organizational performance. Following a competitive evaluation and judging process, the top candidates are selected for national recognition by the American Psychological Association.

#### **APA's Best Practices Honors**

The Best Practices Honors is a national recognition that focuses on a single program or policy that stands out for its facilitation of a psychologically healthy workplace. Special attention is given to workplace practices that are designed and implemented in a way that creatively meets the specific needs of the organization and its employees. As with the National Award, nominees come from the pool of previous state-level winners and are selected through a competitive evaluation and judging process.

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